

September 15, 1943, letter from Willis Laurence James to B.A. Botkin

39 Chestnut Street, S.W. Atlanta, Georgia

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Dr. B.A. Botkin Archive of Folk Song Music Division Library of Congress Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Botkin —

I am very glad that you are please with the songs I sent to you. I am very sorry, however, that I did not do all of the things I had planned. It's not what a man who calls himself a researcher ought to do on a project and yet I am taking solace in the fact that I did the best I could under conditions. I made a good record of Bus Ezell's song — “Roosevelt with Hitler” — which is what you asked for especially.

I am very glad to send you some the “Water Front Songs” of my collection. It is a great joy to have you be interested in

seeing some of them. They are very wonderful, to me. The more so, since most of them could not be gotten to day. I am going to make a few copies of the melodies and texts of some of them at once and send them on to you. If the Library cannot publish them then, I hope you may give me some suggestions and some help in getting them in print so that people may enjoy them.

Sterling's kind words about me, in his new book, are a great favor and a joy to me — though I have not seen the text. May I give you my thanks for telling me of the good news as well as Bliss Wiant's fine reaction.

Library of Congress

Would you like for me to be your fellow correspondent for Negro music in Georgia? Here at the University we have some equipment for making recordings. If you are interested you may write to me at once and I will tell you how to go about the matter. You may

be interested to know that Spelman College and Atlanta University combined, eight years ago through my efforts, and gave me the first full-time fellowship for the study of Negro music ever granted to a Negro. The interest in Negro Folk music here is genuine and profound.

I hope I may have access to the records at Fort Valley for transcriptions.

Very sincerely yours— Willis Laurence James

N.B. I am not a doctor — just a bit of a worker and learner in our common interest.